

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ARA-16 ISO-00 IO-14 EB-11 CAB-09 CIAE-00

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R 231553Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0604

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CI, SF, UK

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCES BAN ON AIRPLANE
ENGINE OVERHAULS AND AIRCRAFT SPARES FOR CHILE AND
SUPPLY OF HELICOPTER TO SOUTH AFRICA

1. THE CURRENT CONTROVERSY OVER WHETHER OR NOT TO OVERHAUL AIRPLANE ENGINES AND PROVIDE SPARE PARTS FOR BRITISH MILITARY AIRCRAFT SOLD TO CHILE ERUPTED IN THE COMMONS ON MAY 21. PM WILSON ANNOUNCED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD COMPLETED THEIR REVIEW OF THE CONTRACTS COVERING THE OVERHAUL AND SUPPLY OF SPARES BY ROLLS ROYCE LTD. TO THE CHILEAN AIR FORCE. AS FOR THE OVERHAUL OF THE ENGINES, PM ANNOUNCED THAT THE CONTRACT BETWEEN THE COMPANY AND THE CHILEANS PROVIDED FOR TERMINATION ON THREE MONTHS' NOTICE AND THAT ROLLS ROYCE WOULD EXERCISE THIS CONTRACTUAL RIGHT AT THE REQUEST OF THE GOVERNMENT. FOR THE SAKE OF CONSISTENCY, CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS TO SUPPLY SPARE PARTS WILL ALSO HAVE TO COME TO AN END. IN THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA, THE PM SAID THE GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED THAT THE EXPORT

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LICENSE FOR ONE WESTLAND WASP HELICOPTER, DELIVERY OF

WHICH WAS OUTSTANDING WHEN LABOR CAME INTO OFFICE,
WOULD ALSO BE REVOKED.

2. WILSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT RESULTED IN AN ACRIMONIOUS
EXCHANGE DURING WHICH THE PM DENOUNCED CONSERVATIVE PAR-
TY LEADER HEATH FOR "HIS LICKSPITTLE ATTITUDE TO THE
CHILEAN REVOLUTION" AND FOR HIS "CONTEMPTABLE" ATTITUDE
TO SOUTH AFRICA. HE COMPARED HEATH'S CLAIM THAT OTHER
COUNTRIES WOULD UNDERTAKE TO SERVICE THE CHILEAN AIR
FORCE ENGINES TO "THE TRADITIONAL APOLOGY OF THE
PROSTITUTE THROUGH THE AGES 'IF I DON'T DO IT SOMEBODY
ELSE WILL.'" LATER DURING THE DISCUSSION WILSON
REFERRED TO ANOTHER CONSERVATIVE MEMBER AS A "FATHEAD."

3. COMMENT. PM WILSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON THE AIRCRAFT
ENGINES WAS PROBABLY MEANT AS PART OF A COMPROMISE OFFER
TO PARTY LEFT-WINGERS WHICH WOULD HAVE PERMITTED THE
GOVERNMENT TO GO AHEAD WITH THE DELIVERY OF TWO SUB-
MARINES AND TWO FRIGATES. IF SO, IT FAILED AS THE LABOR
PARTY NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AT A MEETING ON THE
DAY FOLLOWING THE ANNOUNCEMENT IN COMMONS, ADOPTED A
RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE GOVERNMENT TO GIVE FURTHER
CONSIDERATION TO ITS DECISION ON THE SALE OF THE
WARSHIPS.

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